



The Garden Planner's Compass – A Case Study

Hindsight is a wonderful thing, so they say. Actually, it is not wonderful - it's very annoying, since correcting what I now know to be an error would be rather an expensive exercise. I wish I had never laid eyes on 'hindsight'!

When designing my dreamhouse in Portugal, it never occurred to me that one day I might be less than satisfied when I came to sit on my patio in the last throws of the evening. After all it was a South facing garden, so it's perfect, right?

Wrong. Had I owned a **Sun Compass** at the time of planning, I would have been able to draw in the shadows at around the time of sunset. See the diagram right. It's about 5 o'clock in the afternoon in July, and the sun actually sets about 8 o'clock, and by that time the whole of the patio is in the shade.. Had I been in possession of the compass I would realised that I need to swing the whole house around by 45 degrees.



Now, see left. Look at what I would have been doing at 5 o'clock. Sitting completely in the sun, knowing that even until sunset, I would still have the rays on my gin and tonic melting the ice, and leaving the condensation down the side of the glass. Also, the terrace which runs along the bedrooms would not be in the dark (see photo on right below). Sure there wouldn't be so much sun on the Western side of the property first thing in the morning, but I am busy working in my study then anyway.

I now know the South facing garden is not all it's cracked up to be, and that a South west facing is what I really wanted. Whereas most people don't have a choice and can't control these things, I **could** have done something about it. But not now!

I will end by showing a couple of images which illustrate the problem. Sure, I could move my table and chairs into the sun, and back again in the morning. But I don't, as it is too much hassle. I just accept my cock-up and wallow in the consolation that at least I have a better climate than the UK! Don't be caught out - get a **Sun Compass!** Marty White, Lagarteira, Portugal. July, 2008.

